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**France and the English Other:
The Mediation of National Identities in Post-War Football
Journalism**

by

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Abstract

This study compares and contrasts the evolution of both the form and content of print media coverage of football in France and England during the post-war period. Firstly, the extent to which football has been reported in the ‘quality’ daily press is analysed. How have the role of commentaries on football and writing styles evolved in the French and English newspapers studied? Secondly, ways in which notions of identity have been mediated via football writing since the 1940s is also explored with a view to identifying the principal elements in the construction and evolution of French and English national identities in this section of the media. How has the mediation by football journalism of the problematic Anglo-French relationship evolved since the War? The investigation focuses upon both autotypification (French and English self-definition) and heterotypification (how the French typically view England and how the English view France).

The paper presents the initial findings of a larger study into the analysis of historical sports media text representations of football identities in Europe and provides some insight into the complexity and fluidity of the concept of national identity as communicated via football writing.

**France and the English Other:
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INTRODUCTION

Football's importance as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon within Europe cannot be disputed. The many texts on football produced by academics working in disciplines ranging from sociology, history, economics and politics to media and cultural studies, as well as the explosion in publications for a general readership over the last decade testify to the huge significance of football in modern society. The sports press too (in terms of 'quality' daily and specialist sports publications in France and daily 'qualities' and 'tabloids' in England) are devoting more space to sport and, in particular, to football, the world's most popular game as newspapers recognise the increasing socio-economic importance of football as well as the commercial value that successful and extensive coverage of it brings.

When newspapers throughout Europe cover sports such as football, though, they also communicate many ideas about national identity and, indeed, about international relationships. This paper seeks to explore the extent to which the relationships between the neighbouring countries of France and England are played out in the sports pages of newspapers in each country. How, then, have the form and content of football writing in France and England evolved and contributed to the representation of French and English identities? Football match reports and articles are analysed from a selection of British and French 'quality' daily newspapers. The print media discourse of football writing examined reveals perceptions of the relationships between the two countries which might be commonly held. The present authors have

already studied extensively the coverage of football in the ‘quality’ daily press in contemporary Europe and explored ways in which European print media discourse on football has contributed to the construction of national, regional and group identities (Crolley and Hand 2002). The aim of this study is to seek a historical perspective and examine the evolution of both the form and the content of football writing, comparing and contrasting coverage in France and England. To this end football coverage of matches pitting England against France was targeted in the expectation that some insight into the relationship between the two countries would emerge.

The data are drawn from the occasions of a sample of seven England v France matches, some during the immediate post-war period (1945-1949), tracing the evolution of the form and content of football writing in France and England and taking 1969 as a ‘stepping stone’ to the present day (the most recent encounter took place in September 2000). In order to enable the data to be compared more effectively in terms of form, all matches analysed in this respect were ‘friendly’ games, that is, the teams were not participating in official competitions. When considering content, however, it was felt useful also to include coverage from the 1966 World Cup finals held in England which was football’s first major global media event (1). In France the sample analysed is gathered from *Le Monde*, the country’s most popular general daily while in England all references are to *The Times*, Britain’s oldest ‘quality’ newspaper.

Our methodology has involved the structural analysis of print media texts (which accounts for their surface meaning but also requires an understanding of the underlying meaning of, for example, the lexis and imagery employed) as well as a contextual analysis of the social circumstances in which the texts were produced

(including an exploration of social and political relationships as part of the examination of how readers interpret and decode texts as communication). We understand that the media are not simply passive reproducers of existing social attitudes but are rather co-producers as they play a part in the creation and recycling of societal beliefs. The media create images anew with each textual (re)presentation but necessarily build upon an already existing framework. Their rôle in the production of identity is, therefore, semi-autonomous. By analysing the content of football coverage in the print media, and in particular in match reports, it has become evident that clear notions of French and English identities are reflected in the lexis and imagery of the football writing in the data. The football press plays a part in the production of a shared set of experiences or in the establishment of an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983) which serves to strengthen the notion of distinct French and English national identities.

FRANCE

FORM OF FRENCH REPORTS

The form of football coverage in *Le Monde* has evolved since the War in three ways. First, the space occupied by football has expanded in absolute terms. The France-England friendly matches studied here were previewed throughout the period under consideration. However, there is a distinct contrast between the relatively short previews of the 1940s and those of the year 2000 match (2 September) totalling about 1,800 words occupying over 300 lines spread over the full six column width of the page itself and about three quarters of its length (see table 1).

Table 1

Approximate number of words per preview in *Le Monde*:

Date	Approx. no. words
1945	110
1946	250
1947	95
1949	230
1969	360
2000	1,800

A similar movement can be traced in the match reports themselves (see table 2). In 1945, the report was about 200 words long occupying 30 lines of one column (29 May) while the 1969 friendly received approximately 730 words spread over three columns (14 March). Again, a contrast is supplied by the 2000 match which had over 900 words devoted to it spread over five columns of space (5 September). However, it has to be noted that the 1946 match report (21 May) was actually over 1,000 words long, betraying the general trend as the longest match report in our data. There were special circumstances in operation here, however. France won the game, classified as a Victory International, ‘à la surprise générale’ (*ibid.*) defeating England for only the third time in 19 attempts, a feat clearly meriting special consideration by the newspaper under examination.

Table 2

Approximate number of words per match report in *Le Monde*:

Date	Approx. no. words
1945	200
1946	1,000
1947	385
1949	640
1969	740
2000	900

Second, there has been a significant evolution in content and writing styles. The 1940s previews were very limited in scope, usually confined to listing the probable teams and the players' club affiliations alongside factual résumés of results from previous France-England games. The 1945 preview was even more concerned with the team's travel arrangements (by plane to Croydon) and social activities (tea in the French Embassy) than with footballing matters. By 1969, the match preview has evolved somewhat. It still includes elements of the above but has developed further to incorporate discussion of tactics and players' performances in the recent French Cup matches. Less dry and factual, it has become a more interpretative and elaborate affair. Furthermore, the 2000 previews are typical of the late twentieth century's concern with personalities and, in addition to tactical discussions, focus mainly on the

retirements of players Blanc and Deschamps and the future rôle of Desailly. The content of match reports themselves has also changed. Throughout there is accent on narrative and description, of course, in that obviously action and events on the pitch are being recounted. However, the extra space awarded to match reports in the latter half of the twentieth century is not necessarily put to use to include more details and match facts but rather for more interpretation and elaboration than was the case previously. Football writing becomes more reflective both with regard to footballing issues and, as we shall see, with regard to wider issues of cultural and national identity.

Finally, it is worth noting that the use of photography to accompany football coverage is, in *Le Monde* at least, only a late twentieth century invention. The 1998 World Cup was covered by *Le Monde*'s daily supplements which contained action shots and portraits accentuating the visual aspects of football and foregrounding notions of spectacle. No photographs were used, though, to illustrate the 1940s France-England matches and, more surprisingly, perhaps, photojournalism was also totally absent from the 1966 World Cup coverage. Football is not being singled out here, though: it has traditionally been the house style of *Le Monde* to use photographs only sparingly, especially on the inside pages which is where sports coverage usually appears.

CONTENT OF FRENCH REPORTS

Even the small sample of football writing studied here is revealing in terms of how football is appropriated to communicate information about wider social and cultural issues beyond the game itself and it says much about French approaches to questions of national identity.

First, it is interesting to note the use of what might be termed an inclusive discourse in the match reports and previews of the 1940s that would seem to have disappeared by the 1966 World Cup. In the 1940s, reporters speak of ‘notre gardien’ (21 May 1945), ‘notre défense’ (6 May 1947), ‘nos représentants’ (21 May 1949) and ‘nos avants’ (24 May 1949), for instance, linking the national team, the media and the supporters in a common bond by the simple use of the first person plural. On the one hand, this can simply be attributed to a particular writing style of a certain era that fell into disuse later. On the other hand, it is appropriate to remember that in the late 1940s memories would still be fresh of the fractures created in French society by defeat in the War, the occupation, collaboration and the *épuration* and a strong (if unconscious) need might well have been felt to bolster feelings of national unity by any means possible including through the discourse used to cover sport. It is certainly true that whilst inclusive discourse is no longer the norm in football reporting, it is still used at times of heightened national awareness and pride such as the aftermath of the 1998 World Cup and the 2000 European Championship victories, for instance (see Crolley and Hand 2002: ch. 5).

The ‘our boys’ discourse of football writing so prevalent in the immediate post-war period might well have disappeared by the 1960s but a historical constant in portrayals of the French team throughout the twentieth century is to emphasise notions of national community and collective identity through the simple technique of referring to French players in terms of the national flag. They are often, then, ‘les tricolores’ (21 May 1946, 6 May 1947, 24 May 1949) and ‘le team tricolore’ (30 April 1947, 21 May 1949). This is a standard usage noted in the late 1990s (Crolley and Hand 2002: 75-

87), and right into the 2000 friendly which duly speaks of ‘les attaques tricolores’ (5 September 2000). Admittedly, it is the traditional house style of *Le Monde* to employ stylistic variation, here ‘tricolour’ being used in place of ‘French’, but nonetheless the cultural connotations of French national identity, unity and, indeed, history represented by the famous blue, white and red flag cannot be divorced from this usage.

Next, the military metaphors that are used so widely in the media to describe action on the football pitch in the contemporary period (see Boniface 1998, Crolley and Hand 2002, Garland and Rowe 1997, Hopcraft 1988, Poulton 1999 and Reid 2000) are also in evidence in the earlier periods under consideration here. Even the freshness of the memories of the Second World War does not seem to have diminished sports journalists’ predilection for war imagery. In the 1947 match, for instance, the English forwards were said to have displayed ‘leur habileté à trouver la brèche’ in the French defences (6 May 1947). Similarly, in 1949 the French ‘envahirent le camp britannique’ while one of their opponents, Finney, ‘file comme une flèche’ down the wing (24 May 1949). The 1966 match reports, too, are replete with references to the French fighting bravely and courageously (e.g. 17/18 July 1966, 22 July 1966).

As well as this general military terminology, the use of which is undoubtedly a cliché, there is also evidence of more specifically French socio-cultural references being deployed. Wahl (1989: 159-61) notes that even before the Great War, the press had established a parallel between the preferred style of play of the national team and certain French characteristics derived from military history. In both, apparently, the French typically engage in heroic, fervent and courageous attacks against opponents -

usually German and English - who are generally better organised and more powerful. Images of French courage in the face of adversity in conflict are very prevalent in the football writing of the 1940s and 1960s. The draw against England in 1945, for example, somewhat extravagantly described by Cazal *et al.* as ‘un des plus glorieux matchs nuls de notre football’ (1998: 114), was achieved because the French can do anything when they are ‘animés par le feu sacré’ (29 May 1945) while the victory over the same opponents a year later was due to ‘la fougue et l’inspiration des “tricolores”’ (21 May 1946). Even in the later games in which performances were poorer, the French quality of courage is foregrounded throughout by *Le Monde*. In 1947, ‘on se défendit courageusement’ (6 May 1947); in 1966, the players were ‘courageux’ in defeat against Uruguay (17/18 July 1966) and ‘valeureux’ against England as the French team ‘a courageusement lutté tout au long [du] match’ (22 July 1966). Again, in the 1969 friendly, the French were engaged in a contest that was simply ‘au dessus de leurs forces’ but ‘[ces] garçons ... ont néanmoins lutté avec courage pour s’opposer à des rivaux supérieurs dans tous les domaines’ (14 March 1969). French self-definition through football writing, in the post-war period at least, would, then, seem to depend in part on notions of fervour and courage displayed defiantly in the face of superior opponents.

Finally, perhaps an even more important element of French autotypification is the concept of style. Style and flair are absolutely central to portrayals of the French football team competing in the last three major tournaments of the twentieth century, the European Championships of 1996 and 2000 and the 1998 World Cup (see Crolley and Hand 2002: 75-87). One of the important questions posed here is to see whether these concepts are historical constants or relatively recent constructs. It has to be said

that especially in the 1940s but also in the 1960s data studied, there are far fewer overt references to style and flair than there are in the 1990s and beyond. However, the notions are still present in significant ways. Following France's elimination from the 1966 World Cup, for instance, *Le Monde* rounded (ever so politely) on the manager, Henri Guérin, criticising him for his lack of creativity and his attempts to impose too rigid a defensive system on his players. He did not have the 'personnalité rayonnante' of his predecessors such as Paul Nicolas, general manager of the 'belle équipe' that came third in Sweden in 1958. Style in French football writing is often conveyed using images of radiance, brilliance and shining lights (see Crolley and Hand 2002: 75-87); Guérin did not display the required brilliance and *Le Monde*, along incidentally with the specialist magazine *France Football* (Cazal *et al.* 1998: 201), called for his immediate resignation: 'M. Henri Guérin devrait avoir la sagesse de renoncer' (3 August 1966). He would not be the last French manager to be on the receiving end of a press campaign directed against him for not sufficiently accentuating the qualities of style and creativity (2).

Le Monde goes further in its reflexions on the 1966 World Cup to extrapolate from the early French and Italian eliminations and the English victory what it calls 'L'échec du football latin' (3 August 1966). 1966 represents the 'decline' of the Latin game, incapable of competing with 'la rigueur de systèmes défensifs minutieusement mis en place' by the top northern European teams, England and (West) Germany (*ibid.*). Then, in a highly revealing sequence, the newspaper asks the rhetorical question 'Faut-il réellement s'en réjouir?' before providing its own answer in the negative: 'Ce jeu devrait être surtout riche en mouvements offensifs, vastes, ambitieux, alertes, imaginatifs dans le gout exaltant de l'effort pour vaincre et non seulement pour éviter

d'être battu' (*ibid.*). Clearly expectations in the French sports media are that football should be an arena in which the spectacle of creativity, style and flair is displayed and it is a source of some consternation that what *Le Monde* later calls 'la vivacité, l'inspiration, le don d'improvisation, qualités bien françaises comme chacun le sait' (14 March 1969) are often not enough on their own to overcome the power, strength and organisation displayed by teams such as England. Initial findings from the data studied so far appear to suggest, therefore, that representing Frenchness in terms of creativity and flair is by no means a phenomenon found solely in contemporary sports media discourse.

To turn to England, the French football writing under consideration portrays an English identity that is clearly delineated and essentially based upon the notions of power and organisation, perennial qualities that the French attribute to the English throughout the post-war period up to the present day (for examples from the period 1996-2000, see Crolley and Hand 2002: 105-23).

The 1940s match reporters, for instance, were certainly impressed by the English players' physical fitness and strength; these are quite simply real 'athletes' (29 May 1945, 21 May 1946) whose physical conditioning is to be admired and, indeed, contrasted with that of the French who are often portrayed as lacking in this respect. The theme is picked up in the 1960s as well. In the 1966 World Cup match, the French were 'physically inferior' (22 July 1966) whilst, throughout the competition, the English provided 'un magnifique exemple par leur courage, leur ambition, leur tenacité et leur robustesse' (3 August 1966). Again, in the 1969 friendly the English were physically superior, quick, 'et s'engageaient avec détermination pour un jeu

direct, sans fioriture, qui exprimait la vigueur et la santé du football britannique' (14 March 1969).

In addition to English power and strength, of which the French have traditionally been in awe, the superior discipline and organisational abilities of successive England teams are also frequently commented upon. In the earlier part of the period under consideration, it is generally recognised that England are the supreme power in world football (paralleling Britain's pre-eminence in the diplomatic, military and, to an extent, economic arenas) which is why it was an 'agréable surprise' that France obtained a draw against them in 1945 (29 May 1945) and 'à la surprise générale' that France actually won the 1946 encounter against the acknowledged 'masters' of the game (21 May 1946). Otherwise, images of English superiority over France are very prevalent. The English play 'un football très supérieur à ce qu'on a coutume de voir en France' (6 May 1947), an 'exhibition' style of football provided by players who 'ont donné la leçon à l'équipe de France' (21 May 1949). Within this framework, to lose against England in the 1966 World Cup was no disgrace but, on the contrary, a 'défaite honorable' (22 July 1966). As we have already seen, the lack of style and flair in the typical English game demonstrated at the World Cup is bemoaned and even much earlier the English were being qualified as 'mechanical' (21 May 1946), which is not intended to be complimentary, but nonetheless what are perceived to be the typical English qualities of determination, strength and power are generally admired by French football journalists. In 1966, one writer notes that 'nous avons beaucoup aimé la combativité de cette équipe d'Angleterre' and went on from this starting point to outline the contrasting identities of England and France: 'Elle a montré les qualités qui ont précisément manqué à la France ... engagement athlétique, vitesse

d'exécution, technique individuelle, mises en evidence par une très bonne condition physique' (19 July 1966). In short, this 'solide et énergique sélection nationale' who demonstrated 'magnifiquement ... les superbes qualités britanniques' were 'worthy winners' of the tournament (2 August 1966).

Finally, in an earlier survey of the press coverage of the 1998 World Cup, we noted that French journalists use the terms 'British' and 'English' as interchangeable synonyms (Crolley and Hand 2002: 105-23). This would now appear to be another of the constants of French football writing since the Second World War as there are many examples of it in the previews and match reports of 1946 (2 May), 1947 (6 May), 1949 (24 May), 1966 (22 July) and 1969 (14 March). Technically, of course, it is perfectly correct to refer to English people as being British. In the football context, however, it is totally inappropriate and demonstrates a certain lack of awareness in France of the importance of the distinctions between the four separate football associations in the United Kingdom which themselves play a not insignificant rôle in representing the different national identities within the British state.

ENGLAND

FORM OF ENGLISH REPORTS

Three aspects of the form of the coverage will be analysed. First, as we might expect, the extent of coverage in absolute terms over the period investigated increases substantially (see table 3).

Table 3

Approximate number of words per match report in *The Times*:

Date	Approx. no. words
1945	250
1946	100
1947	550
1949	750
1969	1,270
2000	5,000

The clear pattern is an increase in the extent of coverage. The exception is in 1946 when *The Times* did not even send a correspondent to the venue, Colombes, and the ‘report’ of two sentences consisted only of a message relayed from Reuters press agency.

Surprisingly, the amount of space dedicated to pre-match comment has not seen a parallel development (see table 4).

Table 4

Approximate number of words per preview in *The Times*:

Date	Approx. no. words
1945	275
1946	0
1947	350
1949	75
1969	120
2000	3,000

Second, the format and writing style have evolved. In general, early previews are factual, refer largely to location and team selections in objective terms and even provide information about how to get into the match. There are sometimes references made to previous encounters (26 May 1945) or pre-match arrangements (*ibid.*). In the preview of the game played on 26 May 1945, there is no mention of the football match. Instead prominence is awarded to pre-match arrangements and the military significance of the game. Later previews linger more on discussing previous encounters between the two teams. As texts increase in length there is more space to develop comment. The extra words fill out the information with more descriptive narrative, including some more imaginative imagery, as well as providing more information and in-depth analysis. The 2000 previews (which by then occupy over three pages and include seven articles and two tables) reflect the heightened interest in personalities and gossip, as well as covering in much greater detail than previously

team selection, past encounters between the teams, information about the stadium, travel and fans. Political comment also accompanies comment on football. Quotes are drawn not only from players and managers but also from anyone associated with the match (or past fixtures). A new feature is the interest paid to French players playing for English clubs. Noticeably, there is also an increased awareness of other (especially European) clubs, reflecting to some extent, perhaps, the globalisation (or at least Europeanisation) of football.

Third, the first photograph in our data appears in 1969. By this time, in general, football is given a much higher profile and there has been something of a revolution in terms of football coverage, not only in the number of words devoted to it (1,200 for the friendly match in 1969) but also prominence in terms of its key position on the page (occupying the first three columns with a photograph across the middle three columns at the top of the page). This trend continues as football dominates the sports pages of *The Times* by 2000.

CONTENT OF ENGLISH REPORTS

There are several indicators that information conveyed in football writing in *The Times* can provide a useful insight into a broader social context and into relationships between England and France. Features worthy of mention in our analysis include images of France and the French style of play, the use of military terminology and notions of 'Englishness' and the English style of play.

As far as images of France and the French are concerned, even in this relatively small amount of data (in terms of column inches) there is evidence of football writing

drawing upon clichéd images of France: ‘Jack Charlton ... a man who must have seemed to the French as dominating as their own Eiffel Tower at home’ (21 July 1966). French nationhood is here closely associated with the French flag: ‘why were the French able to go in at half time on level terms, with their hearts still high and their many tricolours waving defiantly in the breeze?’ (5 May 1947). The football team and the nation they represent are closely identified, and there seems to be a particular delight in beating the French: ‘The 85,000 crowd were in full throat, fixed it would seem by a special desire to teach the French a lesson. And certainly by the end Gaul had been carved up into many pieces’ (13 March 1969). Perhaps the traditional enmity between the English and the French usually displayed on sporting occasions was further fuelled at this time by the frosty diplomatic relationships between the two countries during the De Gaulle presidency.

As in the French texts, we also note the proliferation of military terminology in English football writing. We have explained elsewhere how military references connect football to a broader socio-cultural and historically-determined perception of ‘Englishness’ (Crolley and Hand 2002: 29-31). Most of the match reports contain some military references, either literal or metaphorical. There is an army band, from the 156th Infantry Regiment of the French First Army playing before the match in May 1945. The band have come ‘straight from Germany where they were fighting until the surrender’ (25 May 1945). A second preview, on the day of the game (26 May 1945) details pre-match military receptions and key military figures who were in attendance are named. This was, indeed, a charity match and monies raised were to go to war charities (28 May 1945). Military imagery is also prominent in football writing of this period: ‘No Continental side has yet lowered England’s colours on English soil, but

two years ago the flag was at half-mast, for France held us to a draw at Wembley Stadium' (3 May 1947); in the same match, an injury to France's centre-half, Grégoire, involved a 'rearrangement of their *forces*' (5 May 1947, our italics) and 'France indeed spent most of the afternoon *fighting* a stubborn *rearguard action* ... [then] they mounted an attack' (*ibid.*) while the 1949 game saw 'a crisis in the English ranks' (23 May). Mangan (1996: 10-38) notes the parallels drawn in Edwardian times between the qualities demanded of a colonial soldier and the virtues acquired through sport. We see in our data evidence that football writing later in the twentieth century also links war and sport and thereby plays its part in the perpetuation of this ideological sporting warrior ethos.

In terms of the French style of play, there is a clear recognition that it is different from the English. France is often portrayed as a 'Continental' side (and there is a tendency to deal with 'Continental' sides as though they were a homogeneous group) and so, for example, 'English forwards must release the ball reasonably quickly for Continental sides recover quickly to form a barrier inside the penalty area' (3 May 1947). There is already some appreciation of French artistry: 'they caressed the ball around smoothly' (21 July 1966), an image which becomes much stronger towards the end of the century. However, the French style of short passing and flair is treated somewhat disdainfully elsewhere as being ineffective: 'In truth this short passing of theirs merely took them around the English defence and never through it at speed' (5 May 1947). This 'problem with things foreign' (Perryman 1999: 24) and denigration of the Other is a feature of English football writing which escalates throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

Related to this are accusations or insinuations that the French cheat, or at least play ‘unethically’ (5 May 1947) as French defenders ‘used their arms as much as their feet and heads’ in order to stop England (*ibid.*) and ‘it was not a great match – there was too much obstruction and unethical continental tackling for that’ (May 23 1949). Carrington (1999) points out how the image of honest, industrious Englishmen contrasts with that of artful foreigners who only ever beat England by luck or by cheating. However, it appears the stereotype of the cheating Other did not emerge latterly as a consequence merely of sour grapes, bemoaning the relatively recent decline in England’s supremacy on the pitch, but rather its roots go much deeper and were in existence even before the English team was beaten on English soil.

Elements of English autotypification are also evident even in the brief match reports of the 1940s. Firstly, the general tone of arrogance masks (albeit thinly) something of a superiority complex in football terms. There is an expectation that England will win (28 May 1945). This is not surprising, perhaps, given the fact that England had never lost at home in an international fixture at this stage, but the tone of the match report for the game played on 3 May 1947 is nevertheless rather arrogant:

France came to Highbury on Saturday in search of the victory on English soil that everyone across the Channel lives for. But they retired a rather sadder and wiser team, for ... England in the end beat them by three goals to none and the beating was even more emphatic than the score would suggest. France in a word were outclassed ... And so, after a ragged start, one more Continental challenge was disposed of summarily (5 May 1947).

Kelly (1996: 8) testifies to the perpetuation of this great myth of English supremacy when he claims that 'There remains an assumption that Britain – or England – is the best'. The image of fortress England resisting invasion from the continent was especially pertinent, of course, in the 1940s. However, in football terms, this superiority complex is fading by the end of the century as 'the unfailing optimism of the English football supporter' is contrasted by 'those who forecast humiliation in Paris' (2 September 2000).

A second, related, feature that emerges in the English football writing studied involves the importance of 'home soil' or playing 'on our shores' (July 21 1966), frequently referred to in the data. Teams coming to England to play are seen as invaders, and France's invasion force is described as a wave when 'the blue shirts of France came like a tide once more' (21 July 1966). The thought of losing a game 'on home soil' is particularly galling to football correspondents. By the late 1960s, following England's World Cup triumph, Wembley is seen as an extension or exemplification of 'home soil' (13 March 1969).

Next, the sporting ethos and emphasis on fair play which it is claimed lay at the heart of the early history of the contemporary game in England (Giulianotti 1999; Mason 1980; Russell 1997, Walvin 1994) remain deeply rooted and match reports reflect this social value of football during this period. It is important that the report be seen as being fair to the opponents and strenuous efforts seem to be taken to achieve this. Hence we read, 'To be fair to France ... [they played 80 minutes with an injured player]' (21 July 1966). It seems essential for the correspondent to acknowledge that 'it was a great performance by France' (28 May 1945) and that France's victory was

‘well-deserved’ and was reported as a ‘fair result’ (*ibid.*). It is common for match reports to end on a reference to the sporting nature (or not) of the game: ‘[England left the field] having exchanged shirts with their opponents in a sporting match’ (21 July 1966).

Finally, even during this period, the English appear to revel in their simple, direct style of football: ‘Swift [England - and Manchester City - goalkeeper] busied himself occasionally by gathering loose balls and – much to the crowd’s enjoyment – kicking them downwind very nearly into the French penalty area’ (5 May 1947). When England do try to play short, passing football, the result is bemoaned as a ‘crab-like approach, playing across the field’ (13 March 1969). Their reliance on teamwork is also heralded as a laudable attribute: ‘one praises England as a team, for it was its teamwork that pulled it out of a nasty hole’ (5 May 1947). There is also evidence that the English value highly such guileless attributes as bravery and high work-rate. English midfielder, Ian Callaghan [of Liverpool], is lauded for playing ‘full of heart’ (13 March 1969), a feature of the English style of play which we see developed much further towards the end of the century (see Crolley and Hand 2002: ch 2). Even French players demonstrating such qualities are praiseworthy: ‘tireless little Simon’; ‘brave Simon’ (21 July 1966).

By 2000, though, the English style is not so easily defined. While the traditional English features of power, commitment and strength are still considered to be virtues in a footballer, English football seems to aspire to something more than that. One commentator bemoaned England’s lack of ‘options’ as Seaman (England’s goalkeeper) ‘had little choice but to strike the ball aimlessly to the half-way line’

whereas Barthez (France's goalkeeper) 'could play short passes to his defenders' (4 September 2000). Other qualities, such as skill, speed and technical ability are lauded. One writer talks explicitly about the English style and how the retirement of Alan Shearer could be significant. 'His presence was stifling creativity' (4 September 2000). Following the match against France, the first England match since Shearer's retirement, 'It felt like a liberation from the yoke of the long ball and lumpen centre forward' (*ibid.*). England can now move on in style. Michael Owen (of Liverpool) is an interesting prospect in this respect: 'With his enthusiasm, his speed, his bravery, his honesty and his rapier finishing, he is the best possible symbol of a new, brighter, fresher England' (*ibid.*). Apparently, Owen represents that which the English would now like to see as their defining 'style'.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we have noted that the form of football coverage in *Le Monde* and *The Times* has changed considerably in the post-war period. The space given to football has generally expanded, especially for match reports, and writing styles have undergone an evolution in that reporting becomes progressively more elaborate and interpretative than it was at the start of the period under consideration. The use of photography to illustrate football coverage, however, would appear to be a relatively late arrival in the newspapers studied. With regard to content, both *Le Monde* and *The Times* may be said to have appropriated football to communicate information about broader social and political issues that are rooted in clearly delineated perceptions of the contrasting nature of typical French and English identities. In this respect, the French self-image is built upon notions of national unity and courage as well as on the supposedly typically Latin qualities of style and creativity. English reports agree on

the distinct nature of France's 'continental' identity but are somewhat disdainful of French inefficiency and 'unethical' tactics. English autotypification is, indeed, constructed upon the importance of fair play as a social value and upon a belief in fortress England's supremacy over its European neighbours, a conviction that, in the post-war period at least, had the merit of being supported by events on the football pitch itself. French perceptions of England are similarly informed by appreciations of English power and combativeness and by an acknowledgement that, in football terms, England's approach is superior if not entirely wholly attractive to French eyes that perennially yearn for displays of individual talent and flair. Post-war football writing in the print media is, then, an important vector for communicating insights into French and English national identities and, as a rich source of research material in this respect, clearly merits further investigation.

NOTES

(1) The 1966 World Cup was the first to be transmitted to televisions around the world using satellite technology while in Britain itself, domestic television channels BBC and ITV devoted no fewer than two hours per night to coverage. Even more pertinent for the present study is that some 1,600 press journalists were also sent to cover the tournament (see Saccomano 1998 and *Le Monde* 12 July 1966). The press coverage studied in this paper, then, is that of the France-England matches played on: 26 May 1945; 19 May 1946; 3 May 1947; 22 May 1949; 20 July 1966; 12 March 1969; 2 September 2000.

(2) See Crolley and Hand 2002, McKeever 1999 and Tournon 2000 for an overview and discussion of the print media criticisms of former manager Aimé Jacquet, for

instance.

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